Pearson Edexcel

A level Music Technology

2022 Exemplar

9MT0/01 Recording

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72. Frequently asked questions

Resources you may want to support your session

9MT0/01 question paper

9MT0/01 logbook

Specification pages 8-20

Audio files of exemplar work

Stimulus audio file

DAW software to import the stimulus track and 4 candidate files for easy comparison

Aims and objectives

Receive feedback on the national performance of candidates in non-examined assessment task 2022 9MT0/01 recording.

Consider why candidates were successful or unsuccessful in task 2022 9MT0/01 recording.

See how the Principal Examiner assessed actual candidate work.

Read answers to frequently asked questions.

Changes to A level Music Technology for 2022

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many aspects of the teaching and learning experience, so we have had to make some changes while maintaining the integrity of the specification and retaining the value of the qualification as a whole.

Ofqual consulted stakeholders to decide what elements of the specification might need to be adjusted in light of the current situation.

The outcomes of the consultation were:

- Non-Examined Assessment (NEA) was retained
- the demands on candidates was adjusted to take into account the loss of in-school time
- NEA requirements must ensure that candidates were not disadvantaged due to any restrictions imposed on their in-school activities.

In response to the outcomes of the consultation, Ofqual published a document outlining what these adjustments would look like in A level Music Technology.

Summary of changes to 9MT0/01 Recording

Standard specification requirements	Revised requirements for submission in May 2022
Choose one song from a list of 10 songs or artists	Song is chosen by Pearson
Length of recording must be between 3-3½ minutes	Recording length is determined by the audio files provided by Pearson on the website (approximately 2½ minutes)
Capture live performances (list of specific instruments on p12 of specification)	No live capture is required. Audio files were provided by Pearson. *Assessment grid 1 – Capture* was not used in assessing recordings in June 2022.
Total mark – 60	Total mark – 48 (because capture was not assessed)

Use of pre-recorded audio files

The most significant change to the NEA was the use of audio files provided by Pearson instead of the requirement for candidates to capture a specific combination of live

instruments and vocals. These audio files were the raw individual tracks taken from one mic. There was no processing or combining of microphone signals. This change was made to ensure that candidates were not disadvantaged if they could not access a recording studio for the requisite time and to avoid any issues with recording vocals in a COVID-secure manner. This means that *Assessment grid 1 – Capture* could not be used to assess the work.

The audio files provided by Pearson were intended to reflect some of the issues that may be encountered by candidates in the capture portion of their project although it is impractical to recreate all potential tracking problems. Candidates accept a variety of performance standards on their recordings based on the level of musicians available, their own expectations, time available etc.; this was taken into account in the tracking of the audio files. Multiple audio files were provided for most of the tracks so that it was possible to comp performances or use alternative sections of a track to repair performance issues.

Recording length

The recording length was reduced to approximately 2½ minutes. There were instructions in the brief as to how candidates should handle the fade-out, so this will affect the overall length. This change was made to reduce the amount of time required in editing and listening to the recording and hence reduce the amount of time candidates may need to spend on the project.

Effects, processing and mixing

The requirement was for candidates to use the pre-recorded audio files to emulate the original recording as provided on the Pearson website (including the fade-out). All editing and processing should have been done with the aim of emulating the original track as closely as possible.

The mark scheme

The mark scheme did not change in any significant way other than the temporary removal of *Assessment grid 1 – Capture*. The task was designed so that the remainder of the mark scheme can be applied in the same way as normal. Note that a few of the *'Marking instructions'* were changed slightly to take account of the change in task, but the contents of the assessment grids themselves did not change in any way. The total mark for this component is 48 instead of 60.

Grade boundaries

2022 was a transition year to reflect that we were in a pandemic recovery period and candidates' education has been disrupted. In 2022 grade boundaries reflected a midway

point between 2021 and 2019.

This approach recognised the disruption experienced by candidates taking exams in 2022 over their course of study, and so provided a safety net for those who might have otherwise just missed out on a higher grade. In 2022, results were higher than in 2019, but not as high as in 2020.

Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z is an outstanding candidate. This shows what is possible by a very able candidate. The logbook can be seen on the following pages.

Logbook:

The logbook is excellent. This logbook is neatly presented. There is a page break in the wrong place between pages 5 and 6 splitting a table. With some candidates, tables split like this can be troublesome to read but not a major issue with this candidate.

A logbook of this quality helps the examiner reward the work because all of the processing is clearly presented. It shows that a lot of thought has gone into this recording.

Page 2 shows a screenshot of the arrange window so that examiners can see what parts are present. Although the text is small, with an electronic logbook it is possible to zoom to read the track names.

Pages 3-16 gives every detail of the processing and mix. In particular, the EQ curves are screenshots which shows the curves more accurately than a pen drawing. All settings of plug-ins are given and the effects busses are clearly presented. It can be seen that the candidate has used busses to group similar tracks together for ease and consistency of processing. This level of detail gives the examiner confidence to award high marks for processing.

There are some inaccuracies in the logbook, e.g. it states that the out ceiling of the limiter is -0.1dB. However, in the audio file it is about -2.8dB. Examiners assess the recording first, then use the logbook if something isn't clearly audible in the recording or if they need confirmation of what they are hearing.

Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

Insert a screenshot of your DAW arrange window.

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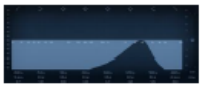
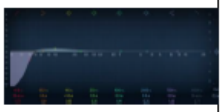
Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

Complete the track sheet below to illustrate your mix and processing decisions.

	Track 1	Track 2	Track 3	Track 4
Instrument/Voice	Intro guitar	Amp noise	DRUMS bus	Kick *(sent through DRUMS bus)*
EQ				
FX	**Vintage console EQ:** *High shelf gain = -6.4dB* *Drive = 4* **DeEsser 2:** *Max reduction = 25dB* *Threshold = -18.1dB* *Frequency = 1666Hz* *Range = wide* *Filter mode = shelving*		**Vintage Tube EQ:** *High boost = 2.2 @6kHz*	**Vintage console EQ:** *Low gain = 4.7dB boost @ 60Hz* *Mid gain = 0.9dB boost @ 3.2kHz* *High shelf gain = 5.5dB* *Drive = 3.9*
Dynamic processing	**Classic VCA compressor:** *Threshold = -22.5dB* *Ratio = 3.9:1* *Attack = 15ms* *Release = 51ms*		**Studio FET compressor:** *Threshold = -12.5dB* *Ratio = 2.1:1* *Attack = 15ms* *Release = 51ms*	**Noise Gate:** *Threshold = -10dB* *Reduction = -100dB* *Attack = 3ms* *Hold = 290ms* *Release = 102ms*
Panning (L–R)				

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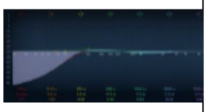
Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

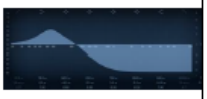
	Track 5	Track 6	Track 7	Track 8
Instrument/Voice	Snare top *(sent through DRUMS bus)*	Snare bottom *(sent through DRUMS bus)*	Claps *(sent through DRUMS bus)*	Stereo clap Left *(sent through DRUMS bus)*
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

	Track 9	Track 10	Track 11	Track 12
Instrument/Voice	Stereo clap Right *(sent through drum bus)*	Low tom *(sent through drum bus)*	Hats *(sent through drum bus)*	Overhead Left *(sent through drum bus)*
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

4

Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Track 13	Track 14	Track 15	Track 16
Instrument/Voice	Overhead Right *(sent through DRUMS bus)*	Bass drop *(sent through DRUMS bus))*	Bass drop top end layer *(sent through DRUMS bus)*	BASS GUITAR bus
EQ				
FX		**send to Bus 11:** *-13.8dB*	**send to Bus 11:** *-15.6dB*	**Amp:** *Gain = 6.7* *Bass = 6.7* *Mids = 4* *Treble = 7.6* *Presence = 7.3* *Master = 9.4* *Amp = British Amp* *Cabinet = British 2x12* *Mic = Ribbon 121* **Distortion:** *Drive = 6dB* *Tone = 980Hz*
Dynamic processing		**Studio VCA compressor:** *Threshold = -12dB* *Ratio = 8.7:1* *Attack = 0ms* *Release = 8ms* *Gain = 7dB* *Limiter threshold = -0.9dB* **Limiter:** *Gain = +12dB* *Lookahead = 5ms* *Release = 250ms*		**Vintage VCA compressor:** *Threshold = -14.5dB* *Ratio = 3.9:1* *Attack = 15ms* *Release = 51ms*

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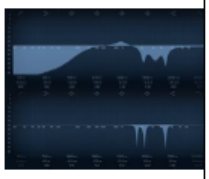
Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

Panning (L–R)				

	Track 17	Track 18	Track 19	Track 20
Instrument/Voice	Bass amp (*sent through BASS GUITARS bus*)	Bass DI (*sent through BASS GUITARS bus*)	ACOUSTIC GTRs bus	Acoustic guitar 1 *(sent through ACOUSTIC GTRs bus)*
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

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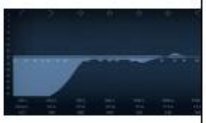
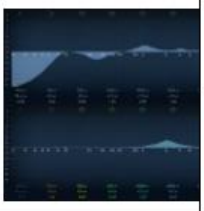
Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Track 21	Track 22	Track 23	Track 24
Instrument/Voice	Acoustic guitar 2 *(sent through ACOUSTIC GTRs bus)*	Verse electric guitar	ELECTRIC GTRs bus	Electric gtr layer *(sent through ELECTRIC GTRs bus)*
EQ				
FX		**Amp:** *Gain = 4.5* *Bass = 4.1* *Mids = 2.8* *Treble = 9* *Presence = 9.1* *Master = 9.4* *Amp = British amp* *Cabinet = British 2x12* *Mic = Ribbon 121*	**Amp:** *Gain = 10* *Bass = 7.6* *Mids = 7.4* *Treble = 9* *Presence = 9.2* *Master = 6.5* *Amp = Modern British Head* *Cabinet = Brownface 1x12* *Mic = Dynamic 421* **send to Bus 11:** *-18.1dB*	**Amp:** *Gain = 10* *Bass = 1* *Mids = 1.4* *Treble = 5.7* *Presence = 1* *Master 9.4* *Amp = British amp* *Cabinet = British 2x12* *Mic = Dynamic 57*
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

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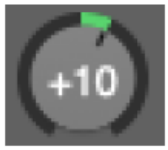
Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Track 25	Track 26	Track 27	Track 28
Instrument/ Voice	Electric gtr 1 *(sent through ELECTRIC GTRs bus)*	Electric gtr 2 *(sent through ELECTRIC GTRs bus)*	Electric gtr 3 *(sent through ELECTRIC GTRs bus)*	Electric gtr 4 *(sent through ELECTRIC GTRs bus)*
EQ				
FX	Amp: *Gain = 4.3* *Bass = 1* *Mids = 1.4* *Treble = 9.3* *Presence = 1.9* *Master = 9.4* *Amp = British amp* *Cabinet = British 2x12* *Mic = Dynamic 57*	Amp: *Gain = 4.5* *Bass = 6.7* *Mids = 3.1* *Treble = 7.4* *Presence = 1.9* *Master = 9.4* *Amp = British amp* *Cabinet = British 2x12* *Mic = Ribbon 121*		
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

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Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Track 29	Track 30	Track 31	Track 32
Instrument/ Voice	Guitar solo 1	Guitar solo 2	Guitar solo reverb track	Guitar solo harmonic
EQ				
FX	**Amp:** *Gain = 4.2* *Bass = 6.7* *Mids = 3.1* *Treble = 7.4* *Presence = 8.3* *Master =9.4* *Amp = British amp* *Cabinet = British 2x12* *Mic = Ribbon 121* **Space Designer Reverb:** *Pre delay = 11ms* *Length = 2s* *Size = 100%* *Dry = 0dB* *Wet = -12.5dB*	**Amp:** *Gain = 10* *Bass = 6.7* *Mids = 3.1* *Treble = 7.9* *Presence = 9.5* *Master 9.8* *Amp = British amp* *Cabinet = Sunshine 4x12* *Mic = Ribbon 121* **Clip Distortion:** *Drive = 21.5dB* *Tone = 730Hz* *Mix = 50%* *Output = +1.5dB* **send to bus 6:** *-10.9dB* **send to bus 20:** *-4.8dB*	**Amp:** *Gain = 10* *Bass = 6.7* *Mids = 3.1* *Treble = 7.9* *Presence = 9.5* *Master =9.8* *Amp = British amp* *Cabinet = Sunshine 4x12* *Mic = Ribbon 121* **Space Designer Reverb:** *Pre delay = 185ms* *Length = 6.1s* *Size = 180%* *Dry = mute* *Wet = -16dB*	**Amp:** *Gain = 10* *Bass = 6.7* *Mids = 3.1* *Treble = 7.9* *Presence = 9.5* *Master =9.8* *Amp = British amp* *Cabinet = Sunshine 4x12* *Mic = Ribbon 121* **Space Designer Reverb:** *Pre delay = 0ms* *Length = 3.39ms* *Size = 100%* *Dry = -4dB* *Wet = -7.4dB* **send to bus 6:** *-12.2dB*
Dynamic processing		**Studio FET Compressor:** *Threshold = -19dB* *Ratio = 3.6:1* *Attack = 2.5ms* *Release = 3300ms*	**Studio FET Compressor:** *Threshold = -27dB* *Ratio = 3.6:1* *Attack = 2.5ms* *Release = 3300ms*	**Studio FET Compressor:** *Threshold = -27dB* *Ratio = 3.6:1* *Attack = 2.5ms* *Release = 3300ms*
Panning (L–R)				

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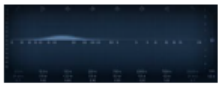
Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Track 33	Track 34	Track 35	Track 36
Instrument/ Voice	Guitar solo 3	MALE VOX bus	Male vox 1 *(sent through MALE VOX bus)*	Male vox 2 *(sent through MALE VOX bus)*
EQ				
FX	**Amp:** *Gain = 10* *Bass = 6.7* *Mids = 3.1* *Treble = 7.4* *Presence = 8.3* *Master =9.8* *Amp = British amp* *Cabinet = British 2x12* *Mic = Ribbon 121* **send to bus 11:** *-17.2dB*	**send to bus 11:** *-19.7dB*		
Dynamic processing	**Studio FET Compressor:** *Threshold = -15.5dB* *Ratio = 3.6:1* *Attack = 2.5ms* *Release = 390ms*	**Studio FET Compressor:** *Threshold = -30.5dB* *Ratio = 2.1:1* *Attack = 15ms* *Release = 51ms*		
Panning (L–R)				

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Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Track 33	Track 34	Track 35	Track 36
Instrument/ Voice	Male vox 3 *(sent through MALE VOX bus)*	VERSE VOX bus	Verse vox 1 *(sent through VERSE VOX bus)*	Verse vox 2 *(sent through VERSE VOX bus)*
EQ				
FX		**Vintage Console EQ:** *Low cut = 50Hz* *Mid Gain = 0.4dB @360Hz* *High gain = 2.2dB* **send to bus 6:** *-20.6dB* **send to bus 11:** *-11.5dB*		
Dynamic processing		**Studio FET Compressor:** *Threshold = -18.5dB* *Ratio = 3.7:1* *Attack = 9.5ms* *Release = 140ms*		
Panning (L–R)				

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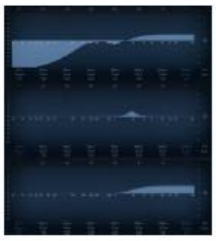
Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Track 37	Track 38	Track 39	Track 40
Instrument/ Voice	CHORUS VOX bus	Chorus vox 1 *(sent through CHOURS VOZ bus)*	Chorus vox 2 *(sent through CHOURS VOZ bus)*	BACKING VOX bus
EQ				
FX	**DeEsser 2:** *Max reduction = 20dB* *Threshold = -22.4dB* *Frequency = 7001Hz* *Range = wide* *Filter mode = band stop* **Vintage Tube EQ:** *High boost = 6.9 @1kHz* **Clip Distortion:** *Drive = 12dB* *Tone = 20Hz* *Mix = 50%* **send to bus 6:** *-11.4dB* **send to bus 11:** *-10.2dB*	**send to bus 16:** *automation @bar 25 = -0.4dB then falls to -∞ by bar 28*		**send to bus 6:** *-13.4dB* **send to bus 11:** *-5.9dB* **send to bus 20:** *-7.6dB*
Dynamic processing				**Studio VCA Compressor:** *Threshold = -24dB* *Ratio = 2.5:1* *Attack = 9.5ms* *Release = 140ms*

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Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

Panning (L–R)				

	Track 41	Track 42	Track 43	Track 44
Instrument/ Voice	Backing vox 1 *(sent through BACKING VOX bus)*	Backing vox 2 *(sent through BACKING VOX bus)*	Backing vox male 1 *(sent through BACKING VOX bus)*	Backing vox male 2 *(sent through BACKING VOX bus)*
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

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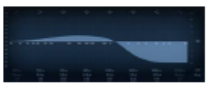
Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Track 45	Track 46	Track 47	Track 48
Instrument/ Voice	OUTRO VOX bus	Outro vox 1 *(sent through OUTRO VOX bus)*	Outro vox 2 *(sent through OUTRO VOX bus)*	Outro vox harmony 1 *(sent through OUTRO VOX bus)*
EQ				
FX	send to bus 11: *-14.8dB*			
Dynamic processing	Studio FET Compressor: *Threshold = -17.5dB* *Ratio = 7.4:1* *Attack = 11.5ms* *Release = 440ms*			
Panning (L–R)				

	Track 49	Track 50	Track 51	Track 52
Instrument/ Voice	Outro vox harmony 2 *(sent through OUTRO VOX bus)*	Outro vox harmony 3 *(sent through OUTRO VOX bus)*	Outro vox harmony 4 *(sent through OUTRO VOX bus)*	Outro vox octave 1 *(sent through OUTRO VOX bus)*
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

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Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Track 53			
Instrument/ Voice	Outro vox octave 2 *(sent through OUTRO VOX bus)*			
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

	Bus 6	Bus 11	Bus 16	Bus 20
Instrument/Voice	Echo	Plate Reverb	Spot Delay	Plate Reverb 2
EQ				
FX	Echo: *Note = 1/8 dotted* *Feedback = 15%*	Space Designer Reverb: *Pre delay = 0ms* *Length = 2.59s* *Size = 100%* *Dry = mute* *Wet = -1.2dB*	Echo: *Note = 1/8 dotted* *Feedback = 67%*	Space Designer Reverb: *Pre delay = 0ms* *Length = 1.75s* *Size = 100%* *Dry = mute* *Wet = -10dB*
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

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Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Candidate Z logbook

	Output
Instrument/Voice	Master Channel
EQ	
FX	**Tape Saturation:** *Tape Head Mode = Clean* **Vintage Tube EQ:** *Low Boost = 2.9 @60Hz* *High Boost = 5.2 @8.5kHz*
Dynamic processing	**Adaptive:** *Gain = 3.1dB* *Out Ceiling = -0.1dB* *Lookahead = 50ms*
Panning (L–R)	

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Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Recording:

The marks on the assessment grids can be seen on the next pages.

This is clearly an outstanding mix. As Chief Examiner, this was the best mix that I heard. In a way, it's off the scale compared with most candidates. Therefore, despite a few minor flaws, this scored full marks. Remember this is A level, not professional level. A mix like this shows that the task was achievable, i.e. sounding very close to the original mix, using the audio files supplied by Pearson.

The EQs match the original very closely. Common mistakes among other candidates were a middle heavy EQ on the vocals, muffled distorted guitars and an over bassy kick drum with no click. Candidate Z was particularly successful in these problem areas. In the logbook, despite the EQ graph, looking at the parameter settings in FX, there is a high shelf on the kick which helps brighten it.

The dynamics in this mix are outstandingly and musically controlled. In particular, the vocals sit with the distorted electric guitars without poking out or being drowned out. Also, the drums cut through the mix at a similar level to the original recording; the tom fill in bar 49 is powerful.

The effects in this mix are detailed and accurate. The vocals are wet enough to match the original. The rhythm guitars have accurate distortions that don't muddy the mix. The FX tails in bars 26 and 65 replicate the original recording well. The lead guitar solo is bathed in ambient effects as the original recording; this was a feature that was often left too dry by candidates.

All parts are clearly audible and well balanced like the original recording. Examiners could look for errors, e.g. the glide guitar is under balanced, but it would be churlish to not give full marks when everything else is so musically balanced.

Stereo is fully utilised and replicates the original recording. In particular, the rhythm guitars and backing vocals are panned across the stereo field.

With the mastering and editing, it's a shame that the master is at -2.8dB, however the perceived loudness is still much louder than most candidates, so full marks can still be given. The master is noise free. There are some edits in the acoustic guitar where the candidate has attempted to match the original pattern more closely.

The mark total of 48 would score an A* grade for this component.

Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Assessment grids:

AG2	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – processing EQ (drum kit, vocals, other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider distribution of frequencies across entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐	No rewardable material, including extreme uncontrolled variation in EQ in a number of places
Level 1	1 ☐	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in shaping EQ; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐	Inconsistent shaping of EQ; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3 ☐	3 ☐	3 ☐	Competent shaping of EQ; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ✓	4 ✓	4 ✓	Excellent shaping of EQ throughout
Mark	4	4	4	**Total mark AG2** 12

Comments:

Ac guit EQ well attempted at start, though not quite correct. Rhythm guitars very close to original.

AG3	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – dynamic processing (drum kit, vocals and other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider management of dynamics across the entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐	No rewardable material, including extreme uncontrolled variation in dynamics in a number of places
Level 1	1 ☐	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in management of dynamics; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐	Inconsistent management of dynamics; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3 ☐	3 ☐	3 ☐	Competent management of dynamics; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ✓	4 ✓	4 ✓	Excellent management of dynamics throughout
Mark	4	4	4	**Total mark AG3** 12

Comments:

Compression used well across all parts for power. Drums clear.

2

Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Assessment grids:

AG4

	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – use of effects, including ambience (drum kit, vocals, other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider distribution of effects across entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐	No rewardable material, including extreme misjudgements in effects use in most parts
Level 1	1 ☐	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in use of effects; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐	Inconsistent use of effects; misjudgements occasionally detract from the success of the overall mix
Level 3	3 ☐	3 ☐	3 ☐	Competent use of effects; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ✓	4 ✓	4 ✓	Excellent use of effects throughout
Mark	4	4	4	**Total mark AG4** 12

Comments:

Verse vox FX good. Drum ambience good. Rhythm guitars close to original. Chorus vox good and wet like original. Good FX tails at 26 and end.

AG5

Marking instructions

0 marks will be awarded if any additional audio, MIDI or virtual instruments are included in the mix or if any audio files provided by Pearson are substituted.

Level	Mark	Production – balance and blend
	0	No rewardable material, including extreme misjudgements in balance and blend in most parts; parts missing or inaudible
Level 1	1	Limited success with balance and blend; misjudgements detract from the overall mix
Level 2	2	Inconsistent balance and blend; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent balance and blend; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent balance and blend throughout
Mark	4	

Comments:

All parts well balanced like the original recording.

3

Candidate Z – an outstanding candidate

Assessment grids:

AG6

Level	Mark	Production – use of stereo
	0	No rewardable material, including completely mono submission or only one channel present
Level 1	1	Limited success in use of stereo; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2	Inconsistent use of stereo; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent use of stereo; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent use of stereo throughout
Mark	4	

Comments:

Vox, guitars, OHds well spread.

AG7

Marking instructions

0 marks will be awarded if any additional audio, MIDI or virtual instruments are included in the mix or if any audio files provided by Pearson are substituted.

Level	Mark	Production – management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing (including compiling, pitch correction, handling of fades, top and tail)
	0	No rewardable material
Level 1	1	Limited success in management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements detract from the overall mix
Level 2	2	Inconsistent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing throughout
Mark	4	

Comments:

Some change to intro ac guit/V1 acceptable to match original. Low out ceiling noted.

TOTAL for Component (48)	48

Overall sounds very close to original recording.

4

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y is typical of a borderline A/B in 2022. Much of the mix is successful but there are some inaccuracies.

Logbook:

The logbook is very good, almost as good as candidate Z. A logbook of this quality helps the examiner reward the work because the capture and processing are clearly presented. There are multiple page break issues which makes it harder to line up the tracks with the pan positions.

The candidate has presented the logbook in landscape, yielding larger screenshots.

The logbook gives every detail of the processing and mix. In particular, the EQ curves are screenshots which are better than drawings.

The busses are oddly presented with many blank columns and inconsistent numbering. There are some things that aren't clear, e.g. is the drum bus a sub-group or an aux reverb? It looks like an aux reverb, but it's not entirely clear. If it is an aux (which it probably is), why is there 36% dry in the signal?

All settings of plug-ins are given. This level of detail could give the examiner confidence to award high marks for processing if the processing was successful.

There are some errors in the logbook, e.g. the panning is only shown on the drums with all other instruments panned central. Listening to the mix, it's clear that the instruments are excellently panned so credit can be given if something is clearly audible in the recording yet incorrectly presented in the logbook. Similarly, it can be seen from the screenshot of the arrange window and heard in the mix that the rhythm guitars are double tracked, but in the mix table only one distorted guitar is shown.

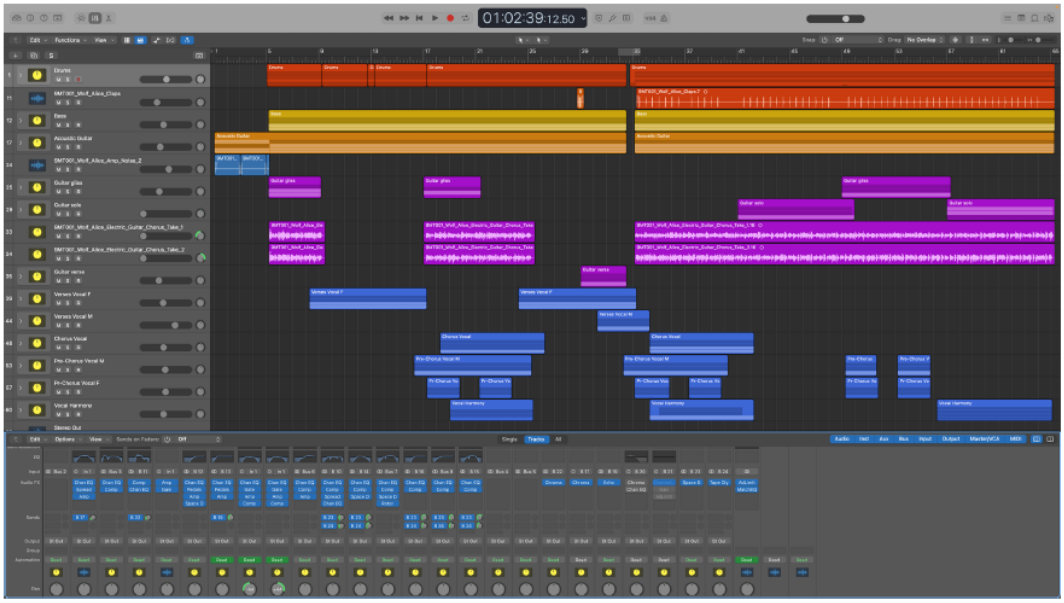
When assessing, the mix takes precedence over the logbook. However, if something is not clearly audible in the mix then credit cannot be given if the logbook is inaccurate.

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

-

Insert a screenshot of your DAW arrange window.

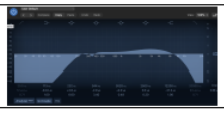
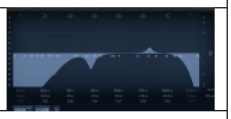
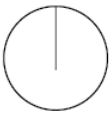
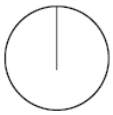


Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

-

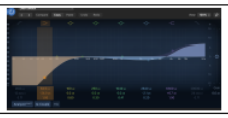
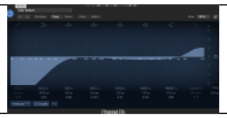
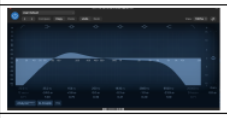
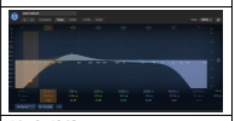
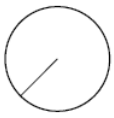
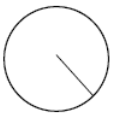
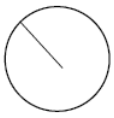
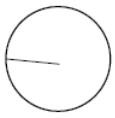
Complete the track sheet below to illustrate your mix and processing decisions.

	Track 1	Track 2	Track 3	Track 4
Instrument/Voice	Kick Drum	Hi Hats	Snare Top	Snare Bottom
EQ				
FX				Gain: -0.1 dB
Dynamic processing	**Noise Gate:** Threshold -16dB Reduction -27dB Attack 3ms Hold 110ms Release 76.5ms High cutoff 1300 Hz **Compressor Studio FET:** -12.5 threshold 2.7 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up Gain Attack: 10 ms Release: 410.0 ms	**Compressor Platinum Digital:** -15.5dB threshold 1.7 :1 Ratio 1.0 Make up Gain Attack: 17.5 ms Release: 9.5 ms	**Noise Gate:** Threshold -19dB Reduction -43dB Attack 3ms Hold 120ms Release 83.1ms High cutoff 3800 Hz Low Cutoff 110 Hz **Compressor Studio FET** -12.0 threshold 2.4 :1 Ratio 4.0 Make up Gain Attack: 50 ms Release: 270.0 ms **Reverb: Send bus 1**	**Make up Gain:** Threshold -23dB Reduction -100dB Attack 3ms Hold 120ms Release 80.9ms High cutoff 3800 Hz Low cutoff 690 Hz **Compressor Studio FET:** -15.5 threshold 3.2 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up Attack: 15 ms Release: 51.0 ms
Panning (L–R)				

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

-

	Track 5	Track 6	Track 7	Track 8
Instrument/Voice	Overhead Left	Overhead Right	High Tom	Low Tom
EQ				
FX			**Pitch Shifter:** Semi Tones -6 Cents 0 Mix 100	**Pitch Shifter:** Semi Tones -3 Cents 0 Mix 100
Dynamic processing	**Compressor Vintage VCA:** -25 threshold 3.6 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up Gain KNEE: 0.7 Attack: 15 ms Release: 51.0 ms	**Compressor Studio FET:** -25 threshold 2.2 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up Gain KNEE: 0.7 Attack: 15ms Release: 51.0 ms	**Compressor Studio FET:** -12.5 threshold 2.5 :1 Ratio 12.0 Make up Attack: 89 ms Release: 220.0 ms	Compressor Studio FET: -12.5 threshold 2.5 :1 Ratio 11.5.0 Make up Attack: 89 ms Release: 77.0 ms
Panning (L–R)				

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

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	Track 9	Track 10	Track 11	Track 12
Instrument/Voice	Claps	Bass Guitar	Acoustic Guitar	Guitar gliss
EQ				
FX	Spread: 100 Lower Int 100 Upper Int 100 Lower Freq 20Hz Upper Freq 20000 Hz Order 12 Amp use Designer Tweed Clean Gain 2 Bass 6.5 MIDS 4 Presence 9.5 Master 9.5 **Reverb; Reverb Send Bus 1**		Reverb Send to Bus 2	Reverb **Amp Designer** **Monster Fuzz Pedal**
Dynamic processing		**Compressor Vintage FET:** -28 threshold 2.1 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up KNEE: 0.7 Attack: 15 ms Release: 51.0 ms	**Compressor Vintage Opto:** -30 threshold 3.w :1 Ratio 1.5 Makeup KNEE: 0.7 Attack: 15 ms Release: 330.0 ms	

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

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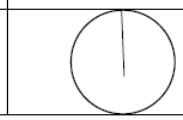
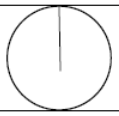
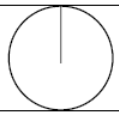
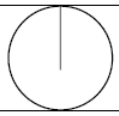
			Limiter on Threshold 0	
Panning (L–R)				

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

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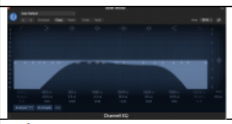
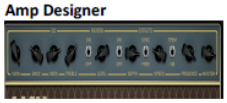
	Track 13	Track 14	Track 15	Track 16
Instrument/Voice	Guitar solo	Guitar chorus	Verses Vocal F	Verse Vocal M
EQ				
FX	**Monster Fuzz Pedal** **Amp Designer**  **Echo Send to Bus 3**	**Noise Gate:** Threshold -46dB Reduction -100dB Attack 21ms Hold 0ms Release 20ms **Compressor Vintage FET:** -16.0 threshold 2.4 :1 Ratio -2.0 Make up Gain Attack: 16 ms Release: 51.0 ms **Amp Designer:** 	**Compressor Vintage Optp:** -25.5 threshold 3.6 :1 Ratio 3.0 Make up Gain Attack: 9.5 ms Release: 97.0 ms **Reverb:** Send Bus 23 **Delay:** Send Bus 24 **Double Tracked** **Stereo Spread:** 	**Compressor Studio FET:** -32.5 threshold 2.1 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up Gain Attack: 15 ms Release: 32.0 ms **Reverb:** Send Bus 23 **Delay:** Send Bus 24 **Reverb:**
Dynamic processing				

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

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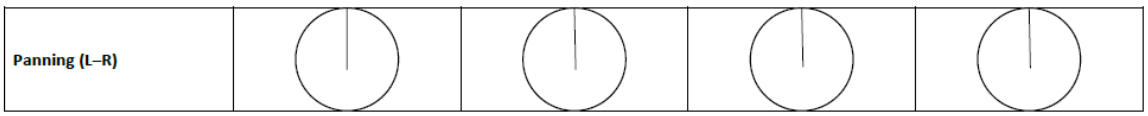

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

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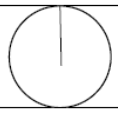
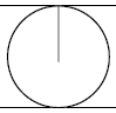
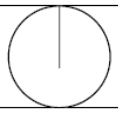
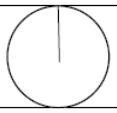
	Track 17	Track 18	Track 19	Track 20
Instrument/Voice	Chorus Vocal	Pre-Chorus Vocal M	Pre-Chorus Vocal F	Vocal Harmony
EQ				
FX	**Compressor Vintage Opto:** -27.5 threshold 3.2 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up Gain Attack: 15 ms Release: 51.0 ms **Reverb:** **Rotor:** 	**Compressor Vintage Opto:** -28.5 threshold 2.1 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up Gain Attack: 15 ms Release: 51.0 ms **Reverb:** Send Bus 23 **Delay:** Send Bus 24	**Compressor Vintage Opto:** -28.5 threshold 2.1 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up Gain Attack: 15 ms Release: 51.0 ms **Reverb:** Send Bus 23 **Delay:** Send Bus 24	**Compressor Vintage Opto:** -38.5 threshold 2.1 :1 Ratio 0.0 Make up Gain Attack: 15 ms Release: 51.0 ms **Reverb:** Send Bus 23 **Delay:** Send Bus 24

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

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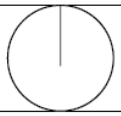
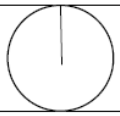
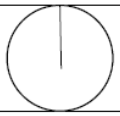
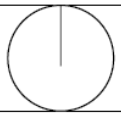
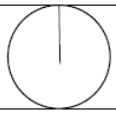
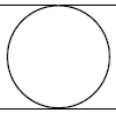
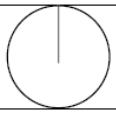
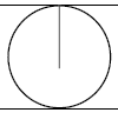
	Track 21	Track 22	Track 23	Track 24
Instrument/Voice	Guitar Verse			
EQ				
FX	**Compressor Studio VCA:** -32.0 threshold 3.3 :1 Ratio -1.0 Make up Gain Attack: 14 ms Release: 51.0 ms **Amp Designer:** 			
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

-

	Bus 1	Bus 2	Bus 3	Bus 23
Instrument/Voice	Drums	Acoustic Guitar	Guitar Solo	Vocals Reverb
EQ				
FX	**Reverb:**	**Reverb:**	**Echo:**	**Reverb:**
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

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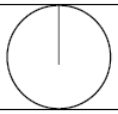
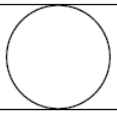
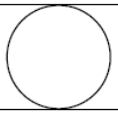
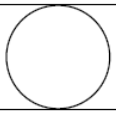
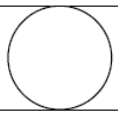
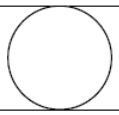
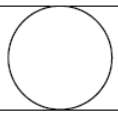
	Bus 24	Bus 6	Bus 7	Bus 8
Instrument/Voice	Vocals Delay			
EQ				
FX	**Delay:**			
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Candidate Y logbook

-

	Bus 9	Bus 10	Bus 11	Output
Instrument/Voice				Stereo Out
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				**Adaptive Limiter**
Panning (L–R)				

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Recording:

The marks on the assessment grids can be seen on the following pages.

This is a mostly successful recording. There is a lot of good work here where the candidate has attempted to recreate the original recording.

Immediately on listening, there are some processing issues that stand out:

- The snare drum is thin, perhaps the bottom mic is too loud compared with the top mic. In EQ, note how the examiner "best-fits" between a mark of 1 and 3 for the different elements of the drum kit, the 1 was for the snare.
- The kick is barely audible when the full texture is present.
- The vocal is hard in the mid frequencies.
- The rhythm guitars aren't distorted enough to fill the mix.
- The "Ahh" vocals at bar 18 are too loud, too lightly compressed and too dry so don't sit in the mix.

There are some minor issues:

- Untidy edit at bar 6 with a silence and a click.
- Overall, the dynamics aren't that well controlled. There is nothing too intrusive, but it is much less dynamically solid that candidate Z. It scores 3s in AG3.
- The mastering level is much lower than the original, but still within tolerance for it not to be considered an issue in AG7.

The are some successes worthy of note:

- The vocals have some good ambience, in particular the female vocals in the verse.
- The use of stereo matches the original with panned vocals, rhythm guitars and drum overheads.
- The lead guitar solo has some accuracy in the ambient effects.

The mark total of 38 would have just scored an A grade in 2022. However, note that the grades were more generous in 2022 than 2019 by about a grade at the A/B boundary.

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Assessment grids:

AG2	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – processing EQ (drum kit, vocals, other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider distribution of frequencies across entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐	No rewardable material, including extreme uncontrolled variation in EQ in a number of places
Level 1	1 ✓	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in shaping EQ; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐	Inconsistent shaping of EQ; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3 ✓	3 ✓	3 ✓	Competent shaping of EQ; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ☐	4 ☐	4 ☐	Excellent shaping of EQ throughout
Mark	2	3	3	**Total mark AG2** 8

Comments:

Clap and snare harsh, Kick OK. Vocals mostly good, although chorus 'ahs' lack the feel of the original. Electric guitar lacks presence and lacks the texture needed.

AG3	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – dynamic processing (drum kit, vocals and other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider management of dynamics across the entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐	No rewardable material, including extreme uncontrolled variation in dynamics in a number of places
Level 1	1 ☐	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in management of dynamics; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐	Inconsistent management of dynamics; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3 ✓	3 ✓	3 ✓	Competent management of dynamics; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ☐	4 ☐	4 ✓	Excellent management of dynamics throughout
Mark	3	3	3	**Total mark AG3** 9

Comments:

drums well handled. All parts heard. Overall levels good, although not enough variation between verses and choruses.

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Assessment grids:

AG4

	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – use of effects, including ambience (drum kit, vocals, other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider distribution of effects across entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐	No rewardable material, including extreme misjudgements in effects use in most parts
Level 1	1 ☐	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in use of effects; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐	Inconsistent use of effects; misjudgements occasionally detract from the success of the overall mix
Level 3	3 ✓	3 ✓	3 ✓	Competent use of effects; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ☐	4 ✓	4 ✓	Excellent use of effects throughout
Mark	3	4	3	**Total mark AG4** 10

Comments:

Drums good, although clap not blended. Vocals reverb and delay works well and beds vocal into the track well. Distortion on electric guitar doesn't give the track the overall punch it needs.

AG5

Marking instructions

0 marks will be awarded if any additional audio, MIDI or virtual instruments are included in the mix or if any audio files provided by Pearson are substituted.

Level	Mark	Production – balance and blend
	0	No rewardable material, including extreme misjudgements in balance and blend in most parts; parts missing or inaudible
Level 1	1	Limited success with balance and blend; misjudgements detract from the overall mix
Level 2	2	Inconsistent balance and blend; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent balance and blend; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent balance and blend throughout
Mark	3	

Comments:

Generally good with some inconsistencies. Clap too loud and electric guitar too far back. Acoustic guitar struggles in verses to cut through and little extra guitar in second half of verse 2 is audible. Some parts excellent, although backing vocals too loud in chorus.

3

Candidate Y – borderline A/B candidate

Assessment grids:

AG6

Level	Mark	Production – use of stereo
	0	No rewardable material, including completely mono submission or only one channel present
Level 1	1	Limited success in use of stereo; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2	Inconsistent use of stereo; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent use of stereo; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent use of stereo throughout
Mark	4	

Comments:

Appropriate use of stereo field to create a sense of space. Final vocals a little wide. Log track sheet implies little panning - DAW screenshot shows panning.

AG7

Marking instructions
0 marks will be awarded if any additional audio, MIDI or virtual instruments are included in the mix or if any audio files provided by Pearson are substituted.

Level	Mark	Production – management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing (including compiling, pitch correction, handling of fades, top and tail)
	0	No rewardable material
Level 1	1	Limited success in management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements detract from the overall mix
Level 2	2	Inconsistent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing throughout
Mark	4	

Comments:

Glitch in bar 6 noted.

TOTAL for Component (48)	38

4

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X is typical of a D grade in 2022. The mix has been attempted but much of the processing is unmusical or exaggerated.

Logbook:

The logbook is less clear than candidates Z and Y.

It gives details of the processing and mix. The EQ curves are screenshots so should be accurate. All settings of plug-ins are given as typed numbers. The candidate could have taken screenshots to save a bit of typing and to preserve accuracy. Remember, now that logbooks are electronic, the examiner can zoom to see detail in the screenshots even if they are small.

The pagination is poor so it's hard to follow what tracks have which settings.

The backing vocals are sent to bus 11 which isn't present in the table. There is a bus 8 labelled "backing vocals" but it's not clear if it's an aux or a subgroup.

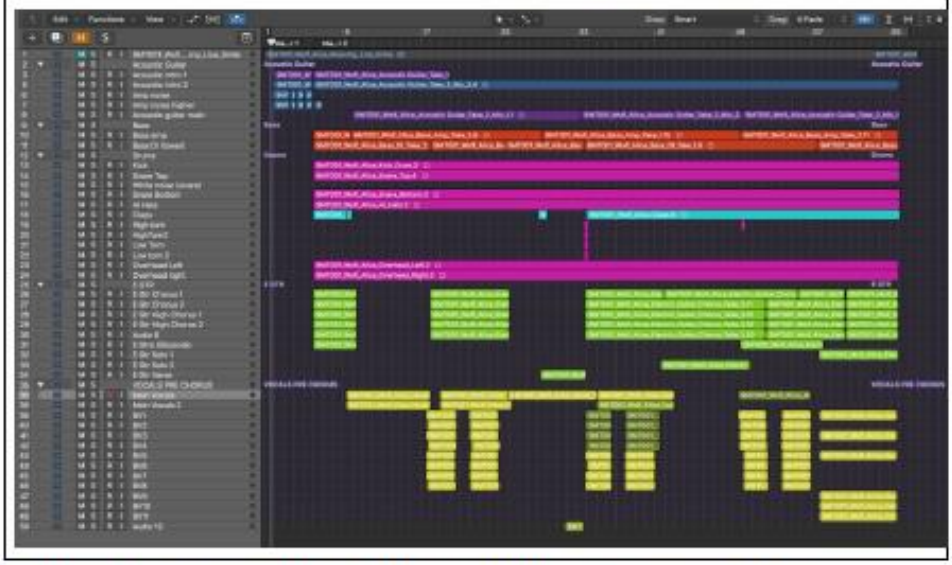
It's not possible to understand what the busses represent. For example, bus 1 is called bass but there is no bass track, so is this just the bass track?

Bus 5 labelled "drum reverb" appears to be an aux for the reverb and bus 6 appears to be a subgroup, but it's not entirely clear how these are routed.

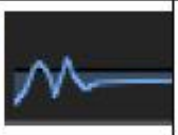
This level of detail could give the examiner confidence to award marks for EQ if the EQ was successful. The signal routing and some of the processing isn't clearly presented so may not be credited if it's not clearly audible.

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

Insert a screenshot of your DAW arrange window.


Complete the track sheet below to illustrate your mix and processing decisions.

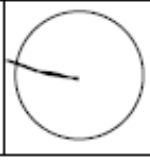
	Track 1	Track 2	Track 3	Track 4
Instrument/Voice	Acoustic guitar intro 1	Acoustic guitar intro 2	Amp noise	Amp noise higher
EQ				
FX	Bus 9	Bus 9	Clean amp with ribbon mic – moved back for duller sound No reverb	Pitch shift-up octave – full mix Large amp with smaller cab to feel like its compressing
Dynamic processing	DeEsser -28dB threshold with a reduction of 15, focussing on 4200Hz to			

2

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

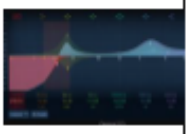
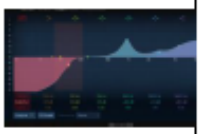
	reduce harshness			
Panning (L–R)				

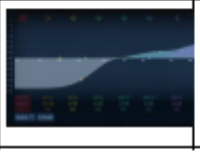
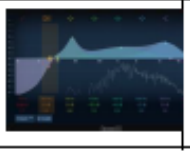
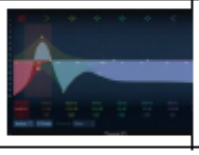
	Track 5	Track 6	Track 7	Track 8
Instrument/Voice	Acoustic guitar main	Crunch guitar	Bass amp	Bass DI (lower)
EQ				
FX	Distortion – 770Hz with drive of 1.5. Light distortion	Amp – distorted amp with large cab and dynamic mic pickup Overdrive – 5600Hz drive of 5.5	 Bass amp sim – crunch with hard comp added and low freq boost (40 for rumble) and cut of 250 to eliminate boxiness	 Clean amp – condenser pickup, centre of cone, mid presence
Dynamic processing	VCA - -20 threshold, ratio of 2, 0 make up No distortion added Pushed output		 FET - -20 TH, 2 R, 0 MP, Mid fast attack with slower release	 FET – 20db th, 3 r, faster release
Panning (L–R)				

3

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

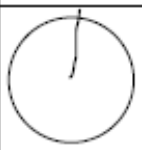
	Track 9	Track 10	Track 11	Track 12
Instrument/Voice	Kick	Snare top	White noise (snare)	Snare bottom
EQ				
FX	Bus 5	Bus 5		Distortion, 8400Hz drive of 3 – sparkle Bus 5
Dynamic processing	Compressor – 4 ration, 28db threshold, semi quick attack to get punchiness without losing sound development. Soft dist **BUS 6**	Comp – VCA - - 20 th, 3 r, 5 make up. 7ms attack, 10 release **BUS 6**	Gate – side chained to snare for white noise effect on snare hits **BUS 6**	Gate – get rid of ring after attack. -61 reduction to be subtle, -26 threshold **BUS 6**
Panning (L–R)				

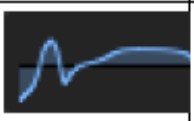
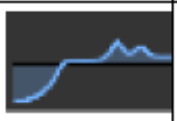
	Track 13	Track 14	Track 15	Track 16
Instrument/Voice	High hats	Claps	High tom	High tom 2
EQ				

4

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

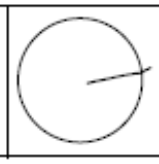
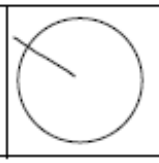
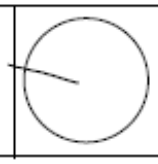
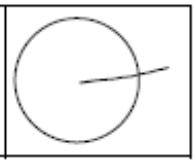
FX	Bus 5	Bus 5	Bus 5	 Mid reverb for low drop, reverb tail ED'd to boost low and cut high Bus 5
Dynamic processing	**BUS 6**	Gate – side chained to kick to trigger **BUS 6**	Soft compression with ratio of 3 to -25 **BUS 6**	**BUS 6**
Panning (L–R)				

	Track 17	**Track 18**	**Track 19**	**Track 20**
Instrument/Voice	Low tom	Low tom 2	Overhead left	Overhead right
EQ				
FX	Mid length reverb, reverb eq boosted mid low Bus 5	Bus 5	Bus 5 Exciter – 6600Hz, high harmonics	Bus 5 Exciter – 12600Hz
Dynamic processing	**BUS 6**	**BUS 6**	**BUS 6**	**BUS 6** Light compression – 1.6:1, -27.5

5

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

Panning (L–R)				
				

	Track 21	Track 22	Track 23	Track 24
Instrument/Voice	E guitar chorus 1	E guitar chorus 2	E guitar high chorus 1	E guitar high chorus 2
EQ				
FX	Amp – clean, boost presence, ribbon		Clean British, treble boost, ribbon, close to cone, centre	British distort amp, take out mid, treble boost, ribbon mic centre but pulled away
Dynamic processing	Bus 2	Bus2 4:1, -18, long release, hard knee	Bus 2	Bus 2
Panning (L–R)				

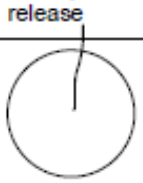
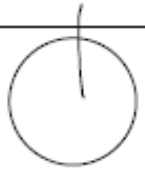
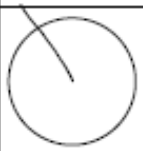
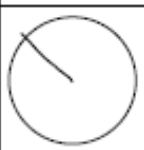
	Track 25	Track 26	Track 27	Track 28
Instrument/Voice	E guitar glissando	E guitar solo 1	E guitar solo 2	E guitar verse
EQ				
FX	1.7s, no pre delay, -10 wet. 0 dry	Reverb-1.7s, tail eq'd to reduce low	Overdrive dist – 870hz to 1.5db with output -1	

6

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

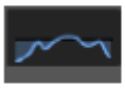
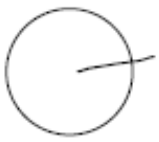
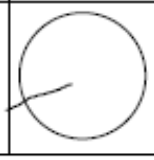
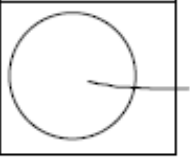
			Reverb – 1.8s	
Dynamic processing	Bus 4 2:1 -20, longer attack and release	Bus 4 VCA, longer release, shorter attack, 4:1. -25db	Bus 4 Opto comp,hard compression with 6.1:1, hard knee	Bus 4
Panning (L–R)				

	Track 29	Track 30	Track 31	Track 32
Instrument/Voice	Main vocals	Main vocals 2	Bv 1	Bv 2
EQ				
FX	Chorus – 1.1Hz rate, 20%intensity, 13% mix Echo – 1/16th, small amount of feedback, 15%wet, full dry Bus 3	Reverb – 1.4s, -13.5 dry, -14.5 wet, 1.4kHz crossover. Reverb eq high cut at 4k Bus 3	Chorus – 22% mix, 18% intensity at 1.367Hz rate	Chorus – 22% mix, 18% intensity at 1.367Hz rate
Dynamic processing	Opto comp – 5:1, -22db, soft knee .7, 15ms attack, 500ms release		Bus 11	Bus 11
Panning (L–R)				

7

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

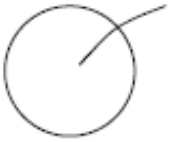
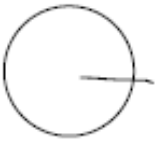
	Track 33	Track 34	Track 35	Track 36
Instrument/Voice	Bv 3	Bv 4	Bv 5	Bv 6
EQ				
FX	Chorus – 31% mix, 0.733Hz rate, 37 intensity 14000Hz overdrive, 16db 1.8s reverb, -11 wet		Reverb -1.8s fit with BV3	Reverb -1.8s fit with BV3
Dynamic processing	Bus 11 5:1 comp, -20db threshold	Bus 11	Bus 11	Bus 11
Panning (L–R)				

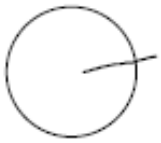
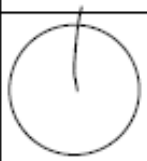
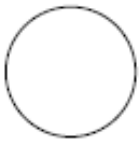
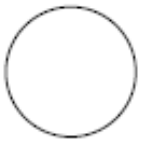
	Track 37	Track 38	Track 39	Track 40
Instrument/Voice	Bv 7	Bv 8	Bv 9	Bv 10
EQ				
FX	14000Hz overdrive, 1-db drive	Reverb -1.8s fit with BV3	3900Hz overdrive with 8db drive Reverb -1.8s fit with BV3, low wet	3900Hz overdrive with 8db drive Reverb -1.8s fit with BV3, low wet

8

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

Dynamic processing	Bus 11 5:1, -20db threshold, 15ms attack	Bus 11	Bus 11	Bus 11
Panning (L–R)				

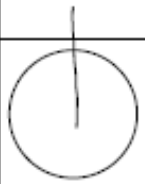
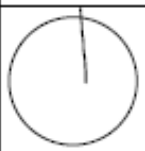
	Track 41	Track 42		
Instrument/Voice	Bv 11	Male vocal part		
EQ				
FX	1200Hz overdrive, drive o f10.5Hz	Reverb, low cut on reverb eq, 1,8s, 230hz crossover, -18.5 wet		
Dynamic processing	Bus 11			
Panning (L–R)				

	Bus 1	Bus 2	Bus 3	Bus 4
Instrument/Voice	Bass	Electric guitar	Vocals	Electric guitar 2
EQ				

9

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

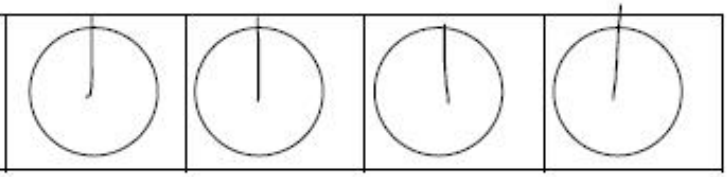
FX	410Hz distortion, 2db drive 1100Hz exciter, 35.5 harmonics, full dry Reverb, very short for thickening		0.7s room reverb, 710Hz crossover, output eq low shelf cut	
Dynamic processing	Comp – 2:1, -20 threshold, 15ms attack, 50ms rel	Multipressor – 500-2500 -11, 20-100 +6	2:1 comp, -20 threshold, soft knee, 15ms attack	5:1 compressor, -35db threshold. 5ms attack, 100ms release
Panning (L–R)				

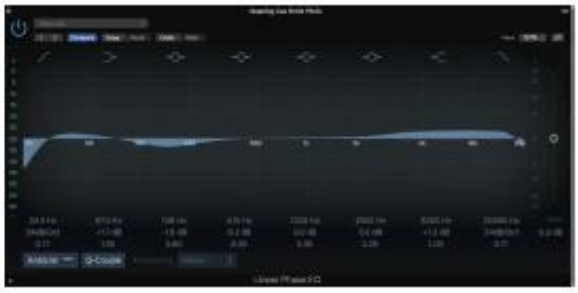
	Bus 5	**Bus 6**	**Bus 7**	**Bus 8**
Instrument/Voice	Drum reverb	Drums	Intro guitars	Backing vocals
EQ				
FX	1.9s reverb, full wet, no dry, controlled via send	2:1 comp with -15 threshold, 10ms atyack for sound to develop, 20ms release for ring	Match eq from original	6300Hz overdrive with 1.25 drive for grit and fuzz.
Dynamic processing	2.5:1 comp, -40db threshold. 9ms attack	Multipressor – 4db + on 20-100Hz		Hard compression, multipressor, 50-500 +3.5

10

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Candidate X logbook

Panning (L–R)				

	Output
Instrument/Voice	Stereo output
EQ	
FX	
Dynamic processing	Multimeter Multipressor – 100-1k +3, 20-100 + 1.5 Limiter - +7 gain, 250ms release, -1.6 db output
Panning (L–R)	

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Recording:

The marks on the assessment grids can be seen on the following pages.

This candidate has made an attempt at applying stylish processing and has some success but most of the processing hasn't been used musically. Credit has been given for attempting the processing, rather than just leaving parts unprocessed.

Immediately on listening there are some processing issues that stand out:

- The vocal in the verse is quite dry.
- The vocals in the choruses seem quiet.
- Compression causes the acoustic guitar fret noise to be exaggerated.
- The whole mix sounds squashed in the loud sections with over compression.
- The cymbals are washy.

There are some minor issues:

- Performance noise at the end.
- The vocal in the outro is panned too far right.

The are some successes worthy of note on the guitars which is why higher marks have been awarded for other parts:

- The amp noise at the start is accurate (although it finishes a little early).
- The rhythm guitars have suitable distortion applied. The thin EQ of the guitars is assessed in AG2.
- The ambient effects on the lead guitar solo are quite successful.

The mark total of 27 would have securely scored a D grade in 2022. However, note that the grades were more generous in 2022 than 2019 by over a grade in E and D grades.

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Assessment grids:

AG2	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – processing EQ (drum kit, vocals, other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider distribution of frequencies across entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐	No rewardable material, including extreme uncontrolled variation in EQ in a number of places
Level 1	1 ✓	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in shaping EQ; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ✓	2 ✓	Inconsistent shaping of EQ; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3 ☐	3 ✓	3 ✓	Competent shaping of EQ; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ☐	4 ☐	4 ☐	Excellent shaping of EQ throughout
Mark	1	3	2	**Total mark AG2** 6

Comments:

Cymbals ringy. Snare thin. Kick lacks definition. vocals lack body. Overall mix lacks warmth - too top heavy.

AG3	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – dynamic processing (drum kit, vocals and other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider management of dynamics across the entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐	No rewardable material, including extreme uncontrolled variation in dynamics in a number of places
Level 1	1 ✓	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in management of dynamics; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ✓	2 ✓	Inconsistent management of dynamics; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3 ☐	3 ☐	3 ✓	Competent management of dynamics; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ☐	4 ☐	4 ✓	Excellent management of dynamics throughout
Mark	1	2	3	**Total mark AG3** 6

Comments:

drums/kick lacks punch. Vocal lacks consistency especially in V2 where there are discrepancies in volume levels. Uplift to chorus evident. Acoustic guitar fret noise exaggerated due to over compression. Drums do not sit in the mix.

2

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Assessment grids:

AG4

	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – use of effects, including ambience (drum kit, vocals, other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider distribution of effects across entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐	No rewardable material, including extreme misjudgements in effects use in most parts
Level 1	1 ☑	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in use of effects; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ☑	2 ☐	Inconsistent use of effects; misjudgements occasionally detract from the success of the overall mix
Level 3	3 ☐	3 ☐	3 ☐	Competent use of effects; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ☐	4 ☐	4 ☑	Excellent use of effects throughout
Mark	1	2	4	**Total mark AG4** 7

Comments:

Guitars distortion excellent. Snare processing inappropriate. Vocal not double tracked. Appropriate reverb on guitar solo. Vocal reverb needs more delay time.

AG5

Marking instructions

0 marks will be awarded if any additional audio, MIDI or virtual instruments are included in the mix or if any audio files provided by Pearson are substituted.

Level	Mark	Production – balance and blend
	0	No rewardable material, including extreme misjudgements in balance and blend in most parts; parts missing or inaudible
Level 1	1	Limited success with balance and blend; misjudgements detract from the overall mix
Level 2	2	Inconsistent balance and blend; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent balance and blend; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent balance and blend throughout
Mark	2	

Comments:

Texture of original attempted but not always successfully. Vocal gets a little lost in choruses at times and too forward in verses. Drum balance inconsistent. Distorted guitars overbalanced. Tom fill in 49 not balanced in mix.

3

Candidate X – D grade candidate

Assessment grids:

AG6

Level	Mark	Production – use of stereo
	0	No rewardable material, including completely mono submission or only one channel present
Level 1	1	Limited success in use of stereo; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2	Inconsistent use of stereo; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent use of stereo; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent use of stereo throughout
Mark	3	

Comments:

Vocal in outro panned R. Excellent spread on guitars.

AG7

Marking instructions

0 marks will be awarded if any additional audio, MIDI or virtual instruments are included in the mix or if any audio files provided by Pearson are substituted.

Level	Mark	Production – management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing (including compiling, pitch correction, handling of fades, top and tail)
	0	No rewardable material
Level 1	1	Limited success in management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements detract from the overall mix
Level 2	2	Inconsistent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing throughout
Mark	3	

Comments:

Noise at end.

TOTAL for Component (48)	27

4

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

In 2022, there were an alarming number of mixes with multiple parts missing like that of candidate W, unlike any previous year.

Logbook:

This logbook is incomplete. The DAW arrange window is present which shows all of the tracks present.

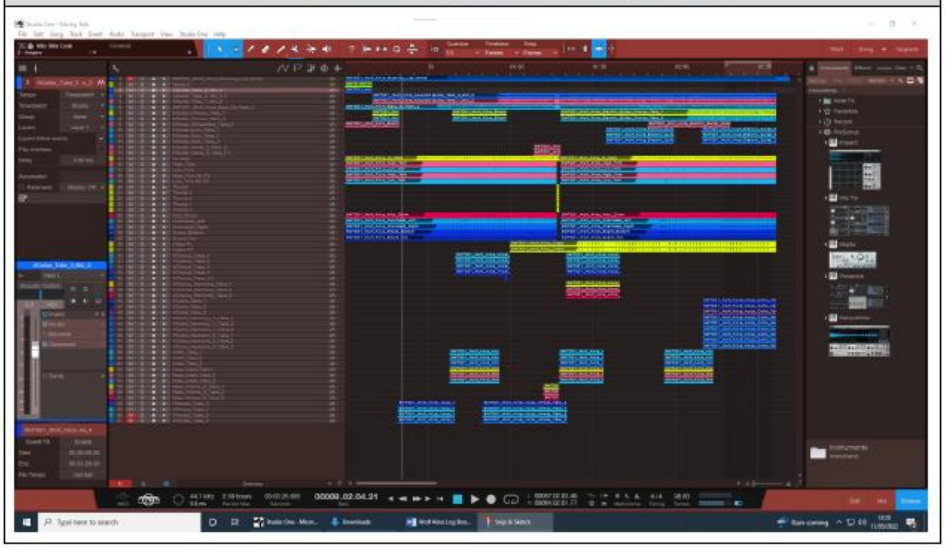
The instruments are listed in the table, but there is no further information.

The pagination is cutting tables in half. Some tables have merged cells into the next row.

It looks as if the candidate didn't allocate enough time to fill in their logbook.

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Candidate W logbook

Insert a screenshot of your DAW arrange window.


Complete the track sheet below to illustrate your mix and processing decisions.

	Track 1	Track 2	Track 3	Track 4
Instrument/Voice	Noise 3	AGuitar_Take_3_Mic_2	AGuitar_Take_3_Mic_2 2	AGuitar_Take_3_Mic_2 2
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

	Track 5	Track 6	Track 7	Track 8
Instrument/Voice	9MT001_Wolf_Alice_Bass_DI_Take_2	EGuitar_Chorus_Take_1	EGuitar_Chorus_Take_4	EGuitar_Chorus_Take_4
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				

2

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Candidate W logbook

Panning (L–R)				

	Track 9	Track 10	Track 11	Track 12
Instrument/Voice	EGuitar_Solo_Take_1	EGuitar_Solo_Take_2	EGuitar_Solo_Take_3	EGuitar_Solo_Take_1
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

	Track 13	Track 14	Track 15	Track 16
Instrument/Voice	EGuitar_Verse_2_Take_22	Hi_Hats	Hi_Hats	Low_Tom
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

	Track 17	Track 18	Track 19	Track 20
Instrument/Voice	High_Tom No FX	Low_Tom No FX	Thump 1-5	Kick_Drum
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

3

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Candidate W logbook

	Track 21	Track 22	Track 23	Track 24
Instrument/Voice	Overhead_Left	Overhead_Left	Snare_Bottom	Snare_Bottom
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				
	Track 25	Track 26	Track 27	Track 28
Instrument/Voice	Snare_Top	Claps PL	Claps PR	VChorus_Take_1
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				
	Track 29	Track 30	Track 31	Track 32
Instrument/Voice	VChorus_Take_2	VChorus_Take_3	VChorus_Take_4	VChorus_Take_42
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				
	Track 33	Track 34	Track 35	Track 36

4

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Candidate W logbook

Instrument/Voice	VChorus_Harmony_Take_1	VChorus_Harmony_Take_2	VChorus_Harmony_Take_3	VOutro_Take_1
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				
	Track 37	Track 38	Track 39	Track 40
Instrument/Voice	VOutro_Take_2	VOutro_Take_3	VOutro_Harmony_1_Take_1	VOutro_Harmony_1_Take_2
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				
	Track 41	Track 42	Track 43	Track 44
Instrument/Voice	VOutro_Harmony_1_Take_3	VOutro_Harmony_1_Take_1	VOutro_Harmony_2_Take_1	VOutro_Harmony_2_Take_2
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

	Track 45	Track 46	Track 47	Track 48

5

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Candidate W logbook

Instrument/ Voice	VOutro_Harmony_ 2_Take_3	VAah_Take_1	VAah_Take_ 2	VAah_Take_3
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				
	Track 49	Track 50	Track 51	Track 52
Instrument/ Voice	Male_Vaah_Take_ 1	Male_Vaah_Tak e_2	Male_Vaah_ Take_3	Male_VVerse_2 _Take_1
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				
	Track 53	Track 54	Track 55	Track 56
Instrument/ Voice	Male_VVerse_2_Ta ke_2	Male_VVerse_2 _Take_3	VVerses_Tak e_4	VVerses_Take_ 1
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				
	Track 57	Track 58	Track 59	Track 560
Instrument/ Voice	VVerses_Take_2	VVerses_Take_ 3		
EQ				
FX				

6

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Candidate W logbook

Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

	Bus 1	Bus 2	Bus 3	Bus 4
Instrument/Voice	Acoustic Guitars	Electric Guitars	Drums	Drums
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

	Bus 5	Bus 6	Bus 7	Bus 8
Instrument/Voice	Drums	Electric G Solo	sub mix	
EQ				
FX				
Dynamic processing				
Panning (L–R)				

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Recording:

The marks on the assessment grids can be seen on the following pages.

This candidate is included in the pack to illustrate what could happen if the candidate doesn't listen back to their final wav file.

It's clear from the DAW arrange window in the logbook, that the candidate had done work on arranging all of the parts to form the song. It's not clear whether there is any processing.

The mix starts promisingly, however there are multiple parts missing. From bar 8, most of the song sounds as if it's just the tom drum mic. There are some snippets of other tracks, e.g. a vocal delay at bar 25.

It's the final bounce that is assessed; the logbook is used as supporting evidence.

Some credit was able to be given for the parts that were present, however credit cannot be given if work is not present. With this many missing parts, marks have been haemorrhaged. This is a shame because looking at the DAW arrange window, the candidate probably did some work that they would have liked to submit.

Examiners are not permitted to ask the centre to resubmit incomplete work because examiners would be helping candidates improve upon their original work after the submission date and they would be giving advice on how to improve their work. Examiners must mark what is submitted.

The problem of the audio file being incorrectly bounced occurred more frequently in 2022 than normal across 9MT0/01 and 9MT0/02. Candidates should check their mixes before submitting them to the teacher. Teachers should double check the mixes. If a teacher discovers an audio file that doesn't sound as expected, then they should ask the candidate to listen to the mix again to check if it's what they expect it to sound like. According to the specification, teachers cannot give advice about how to improve the work but asking the candidate to listen again would be acceptable and the candidate would surely notice the problem with their mix.

The mark total of 7 is well off the bottom of what is required for E grade so this recording would not pass. This low mark would have a significant knock on effect on the overall grade for the qualification.

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Assessment grids:

AG2	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – processing EQ (drum kit, vocals, other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider distribution of frequencies across entire mix
	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ✓	No rewardable material, including extreme uncontrolled variation in EQ in a number of places
Level 1	1 ✓	1 ✓	1 ✓	Limited success in shaping EQ; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐	Inconsistent shaping of EQ; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3 ☐	3 ☐	3 ☐	Competent shaping of EQ; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ☐	4 ☐	4 ☐	Excellent shaping of EQ throughout
Mark	1	1	1	**Total mark AG2** 3

Comments:

Guitars in opening well handled. Drums woolly with untreated resonance. Multiple parts missing. Some evidence of EQ in vocal parts but much missing that cannot be assessed.

AG3	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – dynamic processing (drum kit, vocals and other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider management of dynamics across the entire mix
	0 ✓	0 ✓	0 ✓	No rewardable material, including extreme uncontrolled variation in dynamics in a number of places
Level 1	1 ☐	1 ☐	1 ☐	Limited success in management of dynamics; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐	Inconsistent management of dynamics; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3 ☐	3 ☐	3 ☐	Competent management of dynamics; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4 ☐	4 ☐	4 ☐	Excellent management of dynamics throughout
Mark	0	0	0	**Total mark AG3** 0

Comments:

Insufficient evidence submitted on all parts.

2

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Assessment grids:

AG4

	Drum kit	Vocals	Other parts	Editing – use of effects, including ambience (drum kit, vocals, other parts) Assessment of other parts must also consider distribution of effects across entire mix
	0 ✓	0	0	No rewardable material, including extreme misjudgements in effects use in most parts
Level 1	1	1 ✓	1 ✓	Limited success in use of effects; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2	2	2	Inconsistent use of effects; misjudgements occasionally detract from the success of the overall mix
Level 3	3	3	3	Competent use of effects; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	4	4	Excellent use of effects throughout
Mark	0	1	1	**Total mark AG4** 2

Comments:

Some delay/reverb on vocal credited, and distortion on guitars. Extreme misjudgements on drums and insufficient evidence submitted to assess further.

AG5

Marking instructions

0 marks will be awarded if any additional audio, MIDI or virtual instruments are included in the mix or if any audio files provided by Pearson are substituted.

Level	Mark	Production – balance and blend
	0	No rewardable material, including extreme misjudgements in balance and blend in most parts; parts missing or inaudible
Level 1	1	Limited success with balance and blend; misjudgements detract from the overall mix
Level 2	2	Inconsistent balance and blend; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent balance and blend; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent balance and blend throughout
Mark	0	

Comments:

Multiple parts missing throughout.

3

Candidate W – a candidate that had multiple parts missing

Assessment grids:

AG6

Level	Mark	Production – use of stereo
	0	No rewardable material, including completely mono submission or only one channel present
Level 1	1	Limited success in use of stereo; misjudgements detract from the overall mix throughout
Level 2	2	Inconsistent use of stereo; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent use of stereo; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent use of stereo throughout
Mark	1	

Comments:

Insufficient evidence submitted to assess, but some stereo reverb audible and credited.

AG7

Marking instructions

0 marks will be awarded if any additional audio, MIDI or virtual instruments are included in the mix or if any audio files provided by Pearson are substituted.

Level	Mark	Production – management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing (including compiling, pitch correction, handling of fades, top and tail)
	0	No rewardable material
Level 1	1	Limited success in management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements detract from the overall mix
Level 2	2	Inconsistent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements occasionally detract from the overall mix
Level 3	3	Competent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing; misjudgements do not impact significantly on the overall mix
Level 4	4	Excellent management of noise, distortion, master level and audio editing throughout
Mark	1	

Comments:

Linited success in producing final mix.

TOTAL for Component (48)	7

4

Frequency Asked Questions for the standard task in 2023

Why is there a list of 10 artists?

When the specification was being redeveloped, Ofqual demanded that the briefs must be unpredictable so candidates could not start their recording a year early. Having different artists every year stops candidates gaining an advantage by starting their recording before the briefs are released.

Can candidates choose a song that features members of a given band playing in another band, e.g. Dave Grohl from Foo Fighters playing for Nirvana.

No. The song must be credited to a studio recording with the band name.

Why are there strict requirements regarding instruments that must be recorded?

In the 2008 specification, even with the track count and requirement to record acoustic or percussion instruments, examiners found that the recordings were not comparable. Different candidates recorded wildly different ensembles. These different ensembles were of different difficulty, e.g. drum kit and distorted electric guitar is harder to record and mix than an ensemble without drums and mostly DI'ed instruments. In the current specification there is less variability in the difficulty of ensembles recorded so the recordings can be compared more fairly. With the 2018 Specification examiners have designed the recording unit to steer candidates towards a more suitable ensemble for their level; small ensembles with a variety of instruments that shouldn't mask other parts.

Why are there strict requirements regarding how long instruments must play for?

Unfortunately, in the 2008 specification some candidates met the track count or acoustic instrument count requirements in dubious ways, e.g. recording very short sections of an instrument for it to count as a whole track, or even putting one cymbal hit in their recording to fulfil the percussion instrument requirement. The 2018 requirements prevent candidates potentially gaining an unfair advantage by recording very short tracks.

Can candidates record two lead vocals like a duet? Would one singer count as a backing vocal?

Duets are acceptable. In this case there would be two lead vocals. Therefore there would still need to be a backing vocal added.

Can candidates double track a lead vocal? Would one of the tracks count as backing vocal?

Double tracking a lead vocal is acceptable. This would be considered one lead vocal so there would still need to be a backing vocal added.

Can candidates record two singers singing a lead vocal? Would one of the singers count as a backing vocal?

Two singers singing the same part in unison would be considered one lead vocal so there would still need to be a backing vocal added.

Why is unpitched percussion prohibited?

If candidates include unpitched percussion, credit is capped in some criteria. With the previous specification, examiners found that some candidates added extra percussion instruments, particularly at AS-level. Of course there are exceptions, but these recordings were usually not very successful. Had the candidate muted the percussion part, they probably would have scored a higher mark. Adding unpitched percussion adds a whole world of new problems for candidates to solve, e.g. separating the percussion from the drums, dealing with the dynamics, dealing with the transients etc. Candidates have enough of this type of work to do with the drum kit, therefore it is counterproductive to request further percussion parts to complicate their recordings at this level.

Can candidates arrange the song in any style?

Candidates are not tasked with recreating the original arrangement and recording. Candidates may arrange the songs in any style they wish. It is expected that all songs would need some kind of arrangement to fulfil the instrument requirements, e.g. removing unpitched percussion.

Can candidates sequence keyboard parts?

Yes. The brief states, “You may capture keyboard instruments using … plug-in virtual instruments.”

Can candidates sequence any other instruments?

No. The brief states, “It is not acceptable to use plug-in virtual instruments, virtual instrument player software or drum replacement software to replace any non-keyboard instruments.”

Can candidates sequence synth strings?

If the synthesiser was playing synth string pads as would be played on a keyboard, then that would be acceptable. If the synthesiser was playing a solo string part on a solo violin sound that was intended to sound like a real violin, then that wouldn't be a keyboard part so would be considered that the violin part had been replaced with a keyboard part.
The question paper states "It is not acceptable to use plug-in virtual instruments to replace any of the non-keyboard instruments".

Can I copy and paste choruses?

No. The question paper states:
“You may use any of the following techniques as appropriate:

- drop-ins/overdubs
- double tracking
- compiling complete performances from several takes"

and
"You must not use looping techniques to construct tracks from short sections of audio or MIDI. However, it is acceptable to correct occasional performance mistakes using short sections of audio from elsewhere in the song."
Copy and pasting a whole section of a song is considered to be going beyond “correcting a mistake using a short section of audio” and is therefore unacceptable.

Should candidates master their recordings?

Yes. Mastering is in the specification, topic 1.11. It can be seen that candidates X, Y, Z in this training pack put some kind of mastering on their output tracks.

Can candidates word process their logbooks?

Yes. It is preferred for candidates to word process their logbooks. Candidates must keep to the order of the "questions" and layout of the published logs, including the tables. It is very important that the examiners can find the information that they need quickly in a standardised way when assessing the work. Sometimes candidates submit logbooks with pages and pages of unlabelled A4 screenshots; these are of little use because it is impossible to fathom what the screenshots relate to. It would be best to copy and paste screenshots into the tables, even though they could be quite small. The EQ and compression curves can be seen from the screen shots and provide a guide at a quick glance of the intentions of the candidate.

If all candidates are recording the same drum kit, is it permissible to leave the microphones set up for different candidates to use?

No. The question paper states, “You must be in sole charge of the recording process from capture of audio to mixdown.” This includes microphone choice and placement.

Can all candidates record the same song?

It is permitted for all candidates in a centre to record the same song. However examiners advise against this. Examiners encourage candidates to take ownership of their recordings and record a song that they love; then candidates will get excited about their recording and want to learn and excel. Examiners find that in centres where all candidates do the same song, rote learning occurs. This yields very similar recordings. In such centres often the candidates do less well on 9MT0/04 because they don't have a deep understanding of recording. Another danger of all candidates doing the same song is malpractice where candidates share audio stems. Recordings are forensically analysed to ensure audio stems have not been shared. Penalties for malpractice are severe.

Can candidates share photographs in logbooks?

No. The photographs in the logbook must be of the candidate's recording, not photographs of their peers' recordings. Shared photographs would be considered collusion. Penalties for malpractice are severe.